

GeoData Alliance

Purpose, Principles, Participants & Organizational Concept Agreements to Date

July 14, 2000

The Drafting Team for the GeoData Alliance Organizational Initiative met in Denver, Colorado from July 11-13, 2000. The team affirmed the need for a formal organization and approved the following statements of purpose, principles, participants and organizational concept.

Revised Statement of Purpose

The GeoData Alliance fosters trusted, inclusive processes for partnership and problem solving, and enables the creation, effective, equitable flow and beneficial use of geographic information to improve the health of our economies, our communities and the Earth.

Revised Principles

1. Geodata Alliance is open to any individual or institution subscribing to its Purpose and Principles in conducting Geodata Alliance activities.
2. Members have the right to self-organize at any time, on any scale and around any activity consistent with the Purpose and Principles.
3. Authority shall be vested in, functions performed at, and resources used by the smallest or most local part that includes all relevant and affected parties.
4. Deliberations and decisions of the GeoData Alliance shall be made by bodies and methods that reasonably represent all relevant and affected parties and are dominated by none.
5. Deliberations and decisions of the GeoData Alliance shall use knowledge and information derived from scientific method, practical experience and intuition.
6. Diversity in all forms is desirable and shall be encouraged.
7. Conflict shall be resolved creatively, cooperatively and constructively.
8. To the maximum degree possible, results shall be achieved by persuasion rather than compulsion.

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9. Geographic information has inherent value and the creators of that value should be equitably compensated.
10. Public inspection of data used for governance is a fundamental right and access to these data should be provided.
11. Geospatial data shall be treated as an infrastructure asset and actions of the GeoData Alliance shall encourage creative investment of public and private resources to achieve the Purpose.
12. Standards essential to achieve the Purpose in accord with the Principles shall be established and implemented.
13. Innovation is essential to achieve the Purpose, shall be encouraged and should be fairly rewarded.
14. Each and every part of the GeoData Alliance shall protect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information and sensitive geographic information.
15. Knowledge related to achieving the Purpose of the GeoData Alliance in accord with the Principles shall be openly and fully exchanged unless it violates confidentiality or materially diminishes competitive position.
16. Each and every part of the GeoData Alliance shall pursue greater coherence in the creation and flow of geographic information.

Revised Participants

The outline of participants was not formally altered. It was suggested that consideration be given to including:

Under “For Profit”

- Financial / insurance / real estate services
- Transportation

Under “Additional Classes”

- Human-made objects
- Non-human beings

**Organizational Concept
Summary of Key Agreements**

- The GeoData Alliance shall be a membership organization open to individuals and institutions.
- Interested individuals and institutions can join GDA directly as General Members. The threshold for membership should be low to allow for easy entry and participation.
- General Members will have voting rights in the organization.
- Individuals and institutions may also elect to be Affiliate Members of GDA, which would entitle them to limited benefits (eg publications) but no voting rights.
- GDA activities shall be open to non-members in limited ways, but certain benefits and rights will always be restricted to General or Affiliate Members.
- General Members of GDA can form and participate in Interest Alliances, Community Alliances, Regional Alliances and Multi-Regional Alliances. They should be easy to form, take many different forms, and be easy to disband when no longer needed.
- Alliances will have voting rights in GDA.
- Alliances are not required to be independent legal entities in order to form and apply for membership in GDA.
- GDA emphasizes the desirability of diverse perspectives and interests – and requires, in principle, representation by all relevant and affected parties – but makes no specific requirements in this regard with respect to the formation of Interest Alliances. As Interest Alliances or Community Alliances join to form Regional or Multi-Regional Alliances, increasing representation of diverse sectors, functional groups, etc. is expected.
- Multiple fluid, emergent connections among any and all parts of GDA are encouraged. General Members can join multiple Alliances, and Alliances can link to one another in complex, web-like ways.
- Trustees on a National Council will be responsible for stewardship of GDA. This council will:
 - Be trustworthy and inclusive
 - Be elected by a fair, open and transparent selection process
 - Fairly represent the members of GDA
 - Be “balanced” by sector and geography, with more importance initially being placed on balance by sector (the specific process by which this balance is initially achieved will be subject to a sunset clause)

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- Have initially only those powers and responsibilities required by law
 - Include not more than 30 Trustees
- Voting rights among individuals, institutions and Alliances shall be normalized in a manner yet to be determined.
- GDA will initially have only as much structure as is minimally needed to enable both self-organization and organizational coherence, and that structure must be consistent with Purpose and Principles.

Organizational Concept Detailed Outline of Key Agreements

Aspects of Membership

- The GeoData Alliance (GDA) will be a membership organization. (It has not yet been decided whether GDA shall be nonprofit or for profit.)
- Participation by government agencies as well as for profit companies and nonprofit organizations is essential. The legal status of GDA will be such as to enable all these entities to participate.
- Membership Sectors and Domains are as outlined on Participant list (separate file).
- Individuals and Institutions join GDA directly, as General Members, provided they meet the conditions for General Membership spelled out in the constitution (eg payment of fees).
- General Members will have voting rights in the organization as designated in the constitution.
- Affiliate Members pay an annual membership fee in exchange for publications or other services, but do not have voting rights in the organization.
- Community Alliances, Regional Alliances, Multi-Regional Alliances, Interest Groups and Multi-Interest Groups may also become Members of GDA and shall have voting rights as designated in the constitution.

Interest Alliances

- The most elemental unit of organization within GDA is an Interest Alliance.
- An Interest Alliance (IA) is:
 - Formed for a stated purpose that defines its scope and functions
 - Committed to observing the Purpose and Principles of GDA

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- Composed of GDA Members and others
- Open to all members of GDA with an interest in the topic
- Open to any number of members
- Those eligible to join an Interest Alliance include:
 - Individuals or Institutions who are General Members of GDA
 - Other Alliances of any kind
 - Affiliate Members, on a limited basis
 - Non-members of GDA, on a limited basis
- GDA emphasizes the desirability of diverse perspectives and interests – and requires, in principle, representation by all relevant and affected parties – but makes no specific requirements in this regard with respect to the formation of Interest Alliances.

Community Alliances

- A Community Alliance (CA) is:
 - A community of place and/or interest
 - Formed for a stated purpose that defines its scope and functions
 - Committed to observing the Purpose and Principles of GDA
 - Open to all members of GDA and any number of members
- A Community Alliance, if of some geographic extent, may overlap with the geographic extent of other Alliances.
- Those eligible to join a Community Alliance, by meeting all conditions of membership in that Alliance, include:
 - Individuals or Institutions who are General Members of GDA
 - Other Alliances of any kind
 - Affiliate Members, on a limited basis
 - Non-members of GDA, on a limited basis
- Community Alliances can ally themselves and form a Regional Alliance (RA). The minimum number of Community Alliances required is two.
- Community Alliances join to form Regional Alliances in order to address issues that transcend the jurisdictional or organizational boundaries of CAs and to pursue opportunities of common interest.

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Regional Alliances

- A Regional Alliance (RA) is:
 - A community of place and/or interest
 - Formed for a stated purpose that defines its scope and functions
 - Committed to observing the Purpose and Principles of GDA
 - Composed of at least two Community Alliances
 - Open to all members of GDA and any number of members
- A Regional Alliance, if of some geographic extent, may overlap with the geographic extent of other Alliances.
- The geographic extent of the RA is the sum area of the geographic extent of the constituent Community Alliances.
- Those eligible to join a Regional Alliance, by meeting all conditions of membership in that Alliance, include:
 - Individuals or Institutions who are General Members of GDA
 - Other Alliances of any kind
 - Affiliate Members, on a limited basis
 - Non-members of GDA, on a limited basis
- Regional Alliances can ally themselves and form a Multi-Regional Alliance (MRA). The minimum number of Regional Alliances required is two.
- Regional Alliances join to form Multi-Regional Alliances in order to address issues that transcend the jurisdictional or organizational boundaries of RAs and to pursue opportunities of common interest.

Multi-Regional Alliances

- A Multi-Regional Alliance (RA) is:
 - A community of place and/or interest
 - Formed for a stated purpose that defines its scope and functions
 - Committed to observing the Purpose and Principles of GDA
 - Composed of at least two Regional Alliances
 - Open to all members of GDA and any number of members
- A Multi-Regional Alliance, if of some geographic extent, may overlap with the geographic extent of other Alliances.
- The geographic extent of the Multi-Regional Alliances is the union of the geographic extent of the union of constituent Regional and Community Alliances.

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- Those eligible to join a Multi-Regional Alliance, by meeting all conditions of membership in that Alliance, include:
 - Individuals or Institutions who are General Members of GDA
 - Other Alliances of any kind
 - Affiliate Members, on a limited basis
 - Non-members of GDA, on a limited basis
- MRAs form in order to address issues that transcend the jurisdictional or organizational boundaries of RAs and to pursue opportunities of common interest.

Multiple Affiliations

- Participation by GDA members in many aspects of the organization is encouraged:
- When General Members participate in more than one Alliance, they designate one and only one Community Alliance, Regional Alliance or Multi-Regional Alliance through which they will exercise any applicable voting rights that attach to that Alliance.
- As Interest Alliances or Community Alliances join to form Regional or Multi-Regional Alliances, increasing representation of diverse sectors, functional groups, etc. is expected.

Legal Status of Alliances and Groups

- Initially – in order to help GDA form and flourish –Alliances do not have to be independent legal entities capable of contracting under applicable law.

National Council

- Trustees on a National Council will be responsible for stewardship of GDA.
- This council will be trustworthy and inclusive. Initially it will be “balanced” by sector and geography, with more importance initially being placed on balance by sector. The specific process by which this balance is initially achieved will be subject to a sunset clause.
- Trustees will be elected by a fair, open and transparent selection process.
- The Council as a whole shall fairly represent the members of GDA.
- The Council will have initially only those powers and responsibilities required by law.

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- The maximum size of the Council shall be not more than 30 Trustees.
- Three or more seats on the Council shall be reserved for participation by At Large Trustees selected by the Council itself.

General Governance Issues

- Each Individual General Member has one vote whenever voting rights are applicable.
- Each Institutional General Member has one or more votes, depending on the Institution's size, scale, service area or some other metric to be determined.
- CAs, RAs and MRAs have voting rights based on a metric to be determined.